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SUBJECT: YEREVAN CELEBRATES ANNUAL JAZZ IN ARMENIA PROGRAM, JUNE 4-10, 2008

¶1. SUMMARY: This June, Embassy Yerevan sponsored its 7th annual American Jazz in Armenia celebration in conjunction with the Armenian Jazz Commission's commemoration of 70 years of jazz in Armenia. The Jerry Bergonzi quintet conducted two master classes, and gave public performances at the Aram Khachaturyan Concert Hall and the Avantguard Club. The group also held a VIP event for Ministerial-level officials and other prominent Armenians. Media events included a press conference, a live radio interview and interviews with two local magazines. Post enthusiastically recommends that other Embassies consider programming this talented and easy-to-work-with group as a way to share American jazz with others around the world. END SUMMARY.

¶2. DESCRIPTION: The Public Affairs Section Yerevan in conjunction with the Armenia Jazz 70 Commission initiated the American Jazz in Armenia program, which represented the seventh year that the Embassy has organized jazz events in Armenia. American jazz has become an important tradition in Armenia, and the annual event is the Embassy's most anticipated and popular, for which the Embassy garners much local credit for promoting an American art form that is beloved in Armenia. The program supports the Embassy's goal of promoting mutual understanding.

¶3. THE GROUP: This year, PAS invited saxophonist and internationally recognized jazz performer, composer, author and educator Jerry Bergonzi to perform in Armenia. Bergonzi gathered four additional well-known musicians from the Boston area, each of whom boasts an extensive discography, including trumpeter Phil Grenadier, upright bassist Joshua Davis, pianist Vardan Ovsepyan and drummer Karen Kocharyan to perform with him in Armenia.

¶4. PERFORMANCES: PAS organized three performances in Yerevan. The first performance, in the framework of a VIP event, took place on June 6 at the Malkhas Club, which several ministerial-level government officials and other prominent Armenians, including the Human Rights Defender, the Minister of Culture and the Deputy Foreign Minister attended. The VIP event provided the opportunity for Embassy representatives to meet with GOAM counterparts in an informal setting. At the end of the evening, the group jammed with a local jazz group, and Levon Malkhasian, a famous Armenian jazz pianist, also participated in the performance. On June 7, the quintet played a gala concert in the Aram Khachaturyan Concert Hall to a crowd of about 1,200 people. They were introduced by Armen "Chico" Tutunjian, Armenian jazz musician and recent recipient of the Acknowledged Artist Award, one of Armenia's most distinguished musical honors, for his contribution to jazz music. Jazz aficionados enthusiastically received the group, which played two encores. Golos Armenii, one of Armenia's Russian language newspapers, reported in a June 14 article that the group's music was, "highly intellectual, technically complex, and was immensely pleasurable to listen to." Public TV recorded the performance for rebroadcast. Jerry Bergonzi and his group also played a June 8 venue at Yerevan's Avantguard Club. The club seats 150 people, but the crowd was standing-room-only.

¶5. MASTER CLASSES: The group conducted two master classes at the Naregatsi Art Institute, which attracted about 200 people. Because Bergonzi and Davis are also university professors, the students benefited from both pedagogical instruction and practical advice from experienced musicians. Many of the master class participants,

including an aspiring saxophonist, a jazz singer and a pianist, also attended the groups' concerts. These opportunities had valuable significance from training and cultural exchange points of view.

¶16. MEDIA: The Jerry Bergonzi quintet received a great deal of press coverage in local print and broadcast media, and PAS organized a press conference at the Embassy. The group also gave exclusive interviews to the "3 Million" Armenian magazine (circulation 2500), jazz journalist Armen Manukyan, who writes for the very popular Russian language magazine "Afisha" (circulation 2500), and Golos Armenii newspaper (circulation 3345). Additionally, the group gave an interview to a radio show (106 City FM), which was broadcast throughout the country. All media coverage was positive and supportive of this form of American music and of cultural programming presented by the U.S. Embassy in Armenia.

¶17. LOCAL COOPERATION AND SPONSORSHIP: PAS partnered with the Armenia Jazz 70 Commission. Public TV of Armenia and City FM radio station aired commercials for two weeks prior to the group's arrival and professionally recorded the concert for rebroadcast.

¶18. PAS Yerevan thanks EUR/PPD for providing extra funds, which made it possible to plan this jazz program in Armenia. Posts interested in more information about this particular program are welcome to contact Assistant Public Affairs Officer Susan Bridenstine (bridenstine@state.gov), and Cultural Affairs Assistants Hasmik Mikayelyan (mikayelyhb@state.gov) and Anahit Khachatryan (khachatraa@state.gov).

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